

outWards not UpWards

A Practical Guide to Autonomous Antifascism

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No Roof Only Sky [8]

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- [1] Morag Law - **A' Siubhail Gu h-aotrom** [June 2023]
- [2] sideboard - **Recompile (TNT 89)**; [July 2023]
- [3] Ruairidh Law - **Where The Waves Erode The Heavens** [December 2023]
- [4] Dave Donnelly - **Dialogue #8 Part 1** [March 2024]
- [5] Ruairidh Law/Debbie Armour/James Papademetrie -
One For Finishers [July 2024]
- [6] Dave Donnelly - **Dialogue #8 Part 2** [July 2024]
- [7] **Bare Windows, Many Shades** [May 2025]

- [8] Bameen R. Ears - **Outwards Not Upwards: A Practical Guide to Autonomous Antifascism** [April 2025]

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0: Preface

Even the shortest conversation can plant a seed...

"Hey" he shouted over enthusiastically, "how do I get involved with you guys? I love what you're doing!"

In the blazing sun, he seemed nice enough, and for all we know he was a devout and dependable comrade who could have helped us on that day's action and many other actions in the future. But the reply he received, the answer he *had* to receive was: "Sorry, this is all built on trust. We don't know you. We can't do this work with you."

And that felt kinda harsh. Poor guy was probably going out on a limb even asking. But safety is safety, and OpSec doesn't care about your feelings.

Nonetheless, it was the seed of a thicket in our organising: How do we increase our city's collective capacity to fight fascism without putting our affinity group into harm's way? By its very nature, antifascism is secretive and dangerous work, and that means it'd be incredibly unwise for our little cadre to get bigger. We needed a way to square the circle.

We wrote this text because we *do* want to grow the antifascist movement. But instead of our group growing upwards like a tall tree, connected by ever-thinner branches and networked through innumerable lines of communication - both of which create exponential risks to everyone in the group - we want to share what we know, so that iterations of our model can expand and be copied a hundred times over. We want to grow the movement outwards, not upwards.

We therefore hope that you find here a practical guide to starting your own affinity groups, based on building or developing the trust you have with people you can rely on.

For that reason, this text will not seek to explain to you why fascism is bad, or why antifascism is good, or deliver any highfalutin' analysis about what fascism is, and how to prattle about it in academic spaces. It either presumes that you already know enough about those topics, or that if you don't, you can find good books on them with little effort.

This, instead, is a skill-share, not a lecture; a primer to hands-on militant antifascism: how to form, maintain, and keep safe the small groups of committed radicals who will protect our community.

We don't claim to know everything, but we want to share the lore, lessons and mistakes we've gathered over the past wee while so you can benefit from them all.

We'd truly love to do this in person, to put an arm around you, to meet up every now and then as you grow in your work, to befriend you, encourage you. But we can't.

Sorry.

This is all built on trust.

We don't know you.

So... this is the best way we can think of to square that circle.

We wish you well, stranger.

Be safe.

We love you.

1: Introduction

We begin by emphasising that this is a *practical* guide to antifascism. We will lead you through what works for us, in terms of concrete steps and ways to operate, rather than focussing too deeply on the whys and wherefores of our activity. In that spirit, we've laid out the text in an approximate order of what we feel you should consider as you begin this work.

We also wish to clarify the context in which we're operating: an urban setting within the imperial core. We don't presume that our offerings will hold water outside that context, so please take what you can if your situation differs, and tailor your approaches accordingly.

Our group does not focus solely on rock 'n' roll, cutlass-waving, high octane fash-bashing, and neither does this guide. Antifascism as a whole is much broader than that, so imagine a graph with two axes: up the side there's risk, and along the bottom is complexity. Don't make the mistake of assuming that these two elements increase together. For example, running headlong into a fashy demo with fists swinging doesn't require much prep, yet is very dangerous, and therefore this would sit at the top left (high risk, low difficulty). In contrast, detailed online sleuthing can be done to an extraordinary degree of complexity and can, with certain safeguards in place, be located in the bottom-right (low risk, but difficult to do). And naturally there are low risk/low complexity and high risk/high complexity actions as well. We therefore ask you to consider antifascism as a spectrum, and we aim to cover most of this in our advice in the hope that you, reader, will find a space to inhabit somewhere within that spread.

What we will not guide you on is banal forms of liberal protest and vapid chanting at vaguely right-wing people. As autonomous anarchists, we

don't engage in appeals to statecraft, and while we make no apologies for this political perspective, we feel our advice can and should transcend our positionality, providing succour and utility to anyone who believes in a world beyond fascism.

Finally, a word on us. We have written this text collaboratively, and as such you may find that our authorial tone varies at points. Rather than homogenising our writing styles (itself a fascistic impulse?) we have chosen to present a multiplicity of voices. First, because this honestly represents each of us and the uniqueness of our viewpoints. Secondly, because we feel this displays our politics in action: the unity in diversity of our group and the wider antifascist movement. It will take many of us, with all our lumps, bumps and quirks, to build the world after fascism. We embrace the jumble, we adore the kaleidoscope that fascism abhors, and we stand together as a scrappy tangle of siblings, of comrades, of resisters.

The way we fight, and the world we fight for, are one and the same.

2: Getting Started

Ok, as should be fairly obvious from our anecdote in the preface, asking "how do I find complete strangers to do antifascism with?" is a very bad place to start.

There are lots of reasons why this is the case:

- As we mentioned before, this is all based on trust and therefore you need to be in a pre-existing, trusting relationship with people before you engage in this dangerous work with them: you will feel (and will actually *be*) safer and more connected in your activity if you know exactly where you stand with them from long experience.
- But also, it safeguards against infiltration, whether that's by state forces, the fash, or any other bad actors: giving the "how do you do, fellow kids?" treatment to people you don't know well will make you look at best naive if not incredibly suspicious.
- And, while it may seem glib, the act of hanging out with your affinity group should be fucking joyful: sure, elements of organising can be heavy and stressful, but righteously plotting, exchanging life news and even gossiping is part of a joyous mix. We think, in this context, about the difference between something you have to do, and things you get to do. There's so much to be said for the revolutionary power of friendship. It's not work. It should never feel like work.

And ok, fine, that's a finger-wagging tirade about what you shouldn't do, so... what should you do? Maybe you're new in town, or new to activism, and you know where you want to get to in your militant antifascism, but haven't a clue where to begin.

Start somewhere. No matter where you are in the world, there's some kind of non-spicy activism, collectivising or organising going on. Maybe it doesn't have a Molotov in its hand, perhaps it's not going to make the tabloid covers tomorrow morning, but it's there and it's real. It's doing real good in your community and you can tap into it to make connections.

An example might be joining a local Food Not Bombs group, and if there isn't one, it's a pretty low-stakes thing to start yourself. Or some kind of reading group/film club with nicely subversive content, but we'd probably suggest something that's less of a talking shop and more of an active, change-making thing. Maybe there's an autonomous space, or a housing co-op/squat, somewhere that has activist events and spots to hang out. Or, or, or... there's wholesome stuff there that you can get involved with, guaranteed. (Do try to engage in a little homework first though, just in case they're fronts for some kind of party-political org. It happens. *cough* *Trotskyists*)

A note for shy people: Eesh, some of this is going to involve talking to strangers, at least a little, and that's bloody hard. Fundamentally, be yourself and trust that decent people will act decently. Plus, you know what? A stranger is just a stranger until they're that guy Barry with the six cats. We know this seems trite, but don't build "every human I don't know" into some terrifying monolith. One of them, just one at a time: that's a person you can talk to.

You might want to rock up to something like that as a punter, say getting some food at the community meal or attending an open event at the social centre. Maybe you check it out, find out how nice they all seem (or don't!), learn someone's name and ask a few questions about what they do. Or maybe you just contact them and say upfront "hey, I'm

not super into walking into a room of 20 people and loudly declaring that I don't know anything. Is there a way I could have a chat with one or two people?" You will absolutely not be the first person to ask, and any group that's doing positive things will, by definition, be completely receptive to it. Any group that's weird about that can do one. Their loss.

One other plus-point about setting your stall out via this fairly normie flavour of organising is that any potential snoops would just be doing useful stuff without getting any dirt in return. As the old anecdote goes when a Food Not Bombs member asks their friend, "what if we get infiltrators?", their pal replies "we'll make them peel potatoes."

So, clearly, this isn't a sexy, snappy process that gets you nazi-punching fame in an instant. But honestly, if that glory and buzz is what you're chasing, have a word with yourself. Forge bonds and alliances first. Do what needs doing in your life and your community. It's not about you.

What will, in time, follow from all this (to use a horrible term) networking, is that you'll reach a natural point where you can ask the correct question: "which of my sound mates can I confidently do antifascism with?"

From there, it's a case of meeting more formally as an embryonic antifascist group, where you'll need to come to a consensus on what sort of group you are, how you'll operate, and what you will actively seek to do. We suggest that you do this by collectively agreeing on some Points of Unity.

3: Defining Your Group

This is quite a tricky chapter to write, because your group will be defined by the current context in your area - the nature of the place, the substance of the Fascist threat, the capacities and experience of your people, and so much more. For those reasons, it won't be possible for us to hand you a warm basket of freshly baked Points of Unity (POU). Instead, we'll provide some questions that will help you create your POU:

- **How will your group meet and communicate internally?** We have some pointers on this in the next two chapters, and it's useful for you to mark some of these principles in your POU, particularly if you prioritise OpSec and in-person dialogue (as you should!).
- **How secretive will you be?** Again, check our chapter on communication and try to incorporate your approach into POU.
- **How will you get any new members (if at all)?** Think about your process and briefly sketch it out.
- **Who are you actually seeking to counter?** Is it a named or identifiable group in your area, or a specific political tendency? Is it hardcore neo-nazis, or street-fighting racists without a clear ideology, or cranky immigration-haters, or, or, or...?
- **What are your red lines?** For instance, will you commit to never working with the police, certain political groupings, or the state? What degree of militancy and directness are you willing to adopt? What leeway is there?
- **What would success look like?** Which boxes would you need to tick to know you'd done things well, and what is your vision for a better future in your area? Is there an obvious end goal or end date to your activity?

- Will you have a name, a logo, an outward-facing presence? Again this links to the next couple of chapters and you should spell this out in your POU.
- What behaviours will you seek to promote internally? How will you be with each other, and what will you agree not to accept? How might you manage that? On this, is there another document or approach you can neatly refer to, such as the IWW's Safer Spaces Policy?
- When will you review this stuff? Your POU should be up for revision. They shouldn't be set in stone or a stick to hit people over the head with. Maybe you'll seek to reiterate them and/or remake them every once in a while?

Pro tip: Creating the POU is a good example of something that doesn't necessarily need to be a “one person speaking at a time in a group convo” type situation. You might want to storm up some ideas on this in silence, jotting down thoughts in response to prompt questions such as those listed above, or some looser ones like:

- What are we here to do?
- What are we not here to do?
- What unites us?
- In one or two-word phrases, which values or principles should we embody?

Maybe you go full focus-group and write things on sticky notes, slapping them onto sheets per prompt, or collectively grouping and regrouping ideas that go together. Or maybe you hate that. You do you.

Talk it all through, draft it up, share it out and then discuss at least once more. And lastly, don't make this a massive document that's a chore to read or make. Maximum 1000 words, please.

4: Comms

There are, broadly, two elements to your communications: internal and external.

Internal

As we'll state in no uncertain terms in the next chapter, you should save the vast majority of your internal comms for when you meet face to face. You should prioritise in-person chats over texting because:

- They're much harder to document.
- They're way more difficult to infiltrate.
- You'll have had more time to coolly consider the topic.
- Everyone can join in, versus whoever happens to be on their phone at that time.

Having said that, there is of course a need to communicate between meetings, not least so that you can actually arrange the meetings. We use a Signal group chat with disappearing messages and it works fine. But to recap: it's a means to an end of having in-person discussions. Don't rely on it to have detailed conversations.

One more point on Signal: yes, it's "secure". But it's only as secure as the humans using it. Please, please bear this in mind. It can be screenshotted. Bad actors can read it. People can go rogue. Devices can be hacked. So in the name of all that is holy, don't, repeat DON'T write something down in a storeable, replicable format if you don't need to. Ask yourself two questions:

- Does this *actually* need to be on the internet?
- How does my message sound if I read it out and add the words "your honour" to the end?

Keep Signal for basic, un-spicy things.

External

Your group may not have any requirement for external comms, and that's fine. But there may also be times when you want to alert someone or many people to a current threat, make a call out, or report on an action.

- Communiques/Announcements: For when you want to make a public statement, such as publicising a current issue of fascism in your area.
- Call-Outs: These are outward requests for help or support, such as when you need external people or groups to join in a large action. Note this is very different from recruiting people to join your antifa group - we'd categorically suggest this is always face to face.
- Reports: Pretty self-explanatory, these are ways of telling the world what you've recently done.

Think about your audience: is it other antifascists, locally or globally? Are you “sending a message” to fascists in some way? Are you trying to reach local people or the international public? Get your tone, style and format right for the audience.

In terms of recipients, you can send all the above to someone else to publish, or potentially publicise them yourself on a blog. The former is arguably better, especially for spicier stuff because it can't be tied directly to your group (In the UK, something like Red Flare is a good shout). Even if you do self-publish, you'll still need to tell others it's there, so there will be an element of other external comms anyway.

All of these can be shared in a range of ways. From best to worst in terms of security, these are:

- Individually: either verbally or via encrypted messaging to a single trusted individual.
- By email: for email, you will have to set up a secure group email such as a riseup.net address, and you'll need to consider who in your group has access to it and which trusted sources you'll communicate to.
- Through social media: again, decide as a group who'll have access and how it's used.

A word on Metadata

Please be extra vigilant about scrubbing the metadata on anything you send externally. Photos may have geotagging, and all files may have author info, date/time produced, etc. Look up how to do this.

Alongside POU and Comms, the other main bit of preparatory work you'll need to consider is how you'll conduct in-person discussions. These three are, we'd argue, the essential steps you need to factor in before you get into performing any actual antifascist activity, and for that reason, we now turn to running your meetings.

5: Meetings

Is facilitation capitalist? Yes. Yes it is. We're not in the business of efficiency.

Ok, *fine*, maybe there's room for a mediator-type role in difficult conversations between people who are fundamentally at odds with each other, but that's not our antifa group, right? We trust each other with our lives. It's how and why we do this together. And rather than watching the clock, we value our shared time. So our meetings need to be constructive, yes. Joyful, hopefully yes, even in the face of the Fascist creep(s). But please, no managerial bullshit.

The first and only rule of meetings is HAVE THEM, IN PERSON, REGULARLY.

A group chat on Signal is not and never will be a meeting. Honestly, if your typed message is more than a couple of lines long, save that “mucho texto” shit for a meeting. While we've already said in the last chapter that minimal electronic communication is good OpSec, face to face dialogue is also fundamentally better because nuance, expressiveness, tact, kindness and consideration are maximised when you cohabit a space.

Speaking of security, your mileage may vary, but we put our phones out of the room when we meet. We think you should too.

There are a few things that, in our experience, will make your meetings run smoothly:

- We usually find it useful to start our meetings by collaboratively making a quick agenda: people shout out things to discuss and someone notes them down. At this point - and it's a skill built over

time - it pays to be realistic about how weighty your topics are.

There are meetings when the whole thing is one topic, because it's important, it's detailed and it can't wait! There's no shade at all in saying "that's a lot to get through, can we park X or Y?" and it's also usually sensible to push your must-have topics to the start of the agenda. That said, there are times when lots of quick updates can be gotten through at the outset to clear the way for other items, so you might want to do this when there are snippets of information that can be shared in a snappy way.

- We do have one consistent role in our meetings, and we suggest you do too, someone has to take notes: these help everyone gain clarity and agreement on what was discussed, as well as being valuable for anyone who wasn't at the meeting. Again, note-taking is a skill that you build over time, so do try to share this role around the group, and if you're ever not sure what to write down, ask for a summary for the notes. You may want to use something like a CryptPad for the typed document, sharing the link in your Signal group. Think about how long you do or don't want these notes to be available, balancing the convenience of having them versus the risk of leaving them online forevermore.
- Oh, there is another rule of our meetings which is WAIT YOUR FUCKING TURN and don't speak over people: when someone's speaking, raise your index finger to speak after. If someone has their finger raised, you raise two fingers to show you're next. The next person to raise their hand will put up three fingers and so on. When the first person starts talking, they'll put their hand down and you'll go down to one finger, the person waiting to speak after you will go down to two etc. It's a visual way of keeping track of the order of speakers collectively.

- We have a few other hand signs we use in meetings: the “time out” sign means you need to quickly jump in to clarify something there and then. The jazz hands show agreement with what's being said, and cycling your hands like you're gathering up wool, means "honeys, I love yous but we're rambling." To be fair, we ramble a lot!
- It's a bit corporate, but when things need to be done based on the discussion, you need to agree on action points: who's doing what exactly, and for when. If you haven't got any action points by the end... that's probably a bad sign.

As you start out, it's a good idea to recap how you'll run your meetings, especially for things like agreeing not to talk over one another. The same goes for when you welcome any new people to your group - don't forget that this is all new to them.

Lastly, we need to talk about a tricky subject: power dynamics. Oh, you're all fluffy lefties who wouldn't dream of oppressing anyone? Sorry, no. Gender may well be the thing your group has to keep a particular focus on, but every single one of you needs to be vigilant about the whole range of potential issues. Equally, if you've experienced this stuff in your group, at the very least find someone else in the group to talk to about it, but - we can't emphasise this enough - it is everyone's responsibility to make your group a space of love and mutual support. Do not pin the burden of explaining or resolving this onto the people who have been harmed by it. Have awkward conversations if you need to, and prioritise them over other topics if you must. There can be no righteous fire without collective warmth, and there's none of either if somebody's pissing on someone else's flame.

6: Data Gathering / Intel

Arguably most of what antifascists do in the day-to-day is the incredibly boring and unglamorous work of monitoring the far-right. What this means is simply to keep an eye on what your local fascists are up to, who they are, what their connections are to one another, where they live and are active, and so on. Knowing your local fascists is a pre-condition for being able to take effective and (relatively) safe action against them.

These days, most of this work is done online, and is - provided some basic precautions are followed - physically safe. That isn't to say that it doesn't have consequences. The most serious one is mental - people who are doing this work must be mentally prepared to wade through internal Fascist communication, with all that that implies of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism and so on and so on. It is psychologically difficult, and can warp your perceptions of other people and yourself. Do not go into it unprepared, have support from others in your group, and take a step back when you feel it start to affect you. If you already struggle with your mental health, consider not doing it at all and leaving it to other members of your collective who are better equipped to handle it. Like antifascism in general, antifascist research is sad and boring, for the most part.

So, you've decided that you still want to go ahead - great. These days, since they have largely been driven off the open internet, most Fascist communication happens on encrypted mass communication channels, especially Telegram. Whatever group you're looking at locally is absolutely guaranteed to have a telegram channel, either specific to your locality or nationally, or both. Get a burner phone - a cheap phone at second-hand that can get a hold of the internet - and a new SIMcard with a new number, loaded with some small amount of cash. Then, use

this phone to download Telegram and make your Nazi account. Do not use what sounds like the name of an actual person, but instead use a fake username. Join the channel of whatever group it is you're targeting. If you're looking for more of an overview, be patient - you will probably find links to other ones as you see returning users and other channels and groups referenced and linked.

The first level is simply to lurk in their groupchats, potential websites, youtube channels and other outward-facing communication. Say nothing, just watch and note. The next step - if you feel comfortable with it - is to start becoming active, to comment, try and build trust, become a known name, and see what information you can get out of that. This has to be done extremely carefully, and should be done after just observing for a while so that you learn what normal communications in these spaces looks like. The next level after this, is to try and contact people more directly through their DMs, build trust, and try and get additional information that way. Where do they train? Will their campout be happening soon? Where are they starting their Fascist hike? Will they be present at a demo? Imply that you want to join, see what you can get. This starts to get risky - if you play that game for too long without actually joining, they will probably begin to suspect that you are an infiltrator. They may not give any information at all without seeing forms of ID, or your face, or meeting you face-to-face, depending on how paranoid they are. That represents the final step - physical infiltration.

Physical infiltration of Fascist groups is the most extreme form of antifascist research. This can potentially be very dangerous, both physically but also psychologically, but also give the most valuable information. On account of the absolute drubbing that they have been given by antifascists in Britain during the last 40 years, most British

Fascist groups have become extremely paranoid, and you will need to be very prepared - fake IDs, backstories, ways to get out if you need, people watching you, and so on. Only attempt this if you feel extremely confident, know what you can and want to get out of it, and know that you risk causing large numbers of fascists, some of whom have access to weapons, to have a very personal grudge against you, specifically.

A slightly lower-risk infiltration that still involves physical presence is being present for their demonstrations, mingling with them, and seeing what you can get - you don't even need to pretend to be a Fascist for this, just an ignorant bystander who was interested in some of their politics. They will want to try and recruit you, and might give more away than they want to in that process. Note, however, that this still involves them seeing your face.

During the course of research, whatever you do, stay as safe as you can, continually speak with your collective, be ready to withdraw when necessary, and try not to let it fuck you up too much. Remember that you're doing it so that you can be as safe and effective as possible while fighting them - if you burn yourself completely, you can't be helpful later.

7. Actions

a) Non-Confrontational Actions

Even if you don't have the capacity to perform risky tasks such as infiltration, there is nonetheless much you can do that avoids direct confrontation with fascists.

Actions and Planning

Hundreds and hundreds of actions take place across the world and every day under the broad banner of antifascism. From the removal of Fascist propaganda and the printing and circulation of our own, to banner drops and counter-demonstrations, to hooligan-like ambushes and mass confrontations. Below, we will discuss how you might want to approach some actions related to the antifascist struggle over public space. We are certainly not the first people to talk about how to wheatpaste or do a banner drop - do your research online, try things out and figure out what works for you!

- (Counter)Propaganda and Vandalism: you might want to fill your neighbourhood with antifascist propaganda because some nazis have started pasting their shit up; you might want to do it because there's some sort of fash gathering coming up, or you might just want to make it clear that there are antifascists in the area! These are all good reasons, and there are many more. So how are you going to do that?
- Stickers: you can print your own or order them from a variety of antifascist suppliers. While these are easy to place around with speed and subtlety, they are equally as easy to remove or cover - this works both ways. They can also be quite easy to miss (if you're not looking out for them).

- Posters: posters can be particularly visible and effective, especially if you live in a place where (political) posterage is uncommon. They also allow for more text, which can sometimes be useful or necessary. Accessible to anyone with a printer, a brush and the ingredients for wheatpaste (flour and water).
- Banner Drops: banner drops can take various forms. In its simplest form, this action consists of simply hanging a banner somewhere (over a footbridge, on some railings, on a gate) using string or zip ties. As banners can get taken down pretty swiftly (by cops, council workers, fash, NIMBYs and so on), there might be a point to taking a picture of the banner drop - a lot of people holding it can be used to demonstrate numerical support, while lighting a flare or two can make you seem cool (aka “demonstrate militancy”). How does one make a banner? The answer ranges from spray paint and an old bedsheet (if you want to be quick), to PVC and a stencil (if you want it to be pretty and sturdy!).
- Graffiti: the world is full of ugly walls, so let's make them uglier - all you need is some spray paint! Political graffiti is less common in the UK than elsewhere, and we can use this to our advantage. Explicitly antifascist and antiracist messaging stands out on walls usually filled with individual tags and football semiotics. Make sure you know what you want to write - you are exposed while spray painting, and don't want to leave your message half-finished! It might help to write down a couple of slogans on paper too. If you want to take pictures of the graffiti, it might be worth doing it at a later time rather than stopping at every wall.

The above actions all fall within the confines of a struggle over public space, and share some common characteristics: you want to do them

quickly and without being seen. Think about where, when and how you want to act.

- Where? You may already have a location in mind for this type of action if Fascist provocations have preceded your planning. If not, think about things such as: Who lives around here? Who works around here? How would they react to your action? Do you *want them* to see your action (e.g. an extravagant banner drop), or would you rather they didn't? Are there CCTV cameras about? Chances are there will be, given we live in the most surveilled country on earth - but unless you do something proper illegal it's unlikely footage will be pulled up.
- When? Think about timing - is it better to do things during the day or by the cover of darkness? The answer is not always as obvious as one might think. Darkness sometimes brings increased police presence and patrols. Similarly, some parts of town can be far quieter by the light of day on a Wednesday than on a Friday night. Again, here, you have to think of the aims of your action and who or what you're trying to target.
- How? The actions discussed, as well as a number of spikier ones, can technically be accomplished by one person. Generally, groups of two to five are probably a wee bit safer, but might attract some extra (unwanted) attention. It would be good to do some contingency planning - what do you do if the police catch you in the act? What do you do if somebody else (from bored security guards to 'concerned citizens' and actual fascists) tries to stop you from acting? If you have to make a run for it, do you know the local area? Hopefully these things won't come to pass, and if they do, it's likely they'll play out very differently than they did in your heads - but it's

good to have an idea of possible options and escape routes beforehand.

Other Actions

Limiting our antifascism to direct confrontation at demonstrations (which are often heavily policed) is limiting our creativity, and preventing us from potentially being as effective as we could be. So what do other kinds of antifascism look like? There are two answers to this:

The first is that - to paraphrase the rallying cry of many feminist Irish republicans during the 1980s (talking about how the fight for any form of progressivism is connected to the fight for Irish freedom) - every form of organising can be antifascist.

Community work, antipoverty organising, refugee justice, transgender advocacy, etc., are all connected to the fight against the forces of fascism, as they empower oppressed groups, which makes the far right weaker. The theory goes that the more power oppressed groups have in society (or, to put it another way, the more equitable a society is), the harder it is for the far right to get a foothold - as, simply, their enemies are stronger.

The second is that we can still do directly antifascist (and even confrontational) action without a counterdemo. To be very clear, we're not advocating for premeditated assault here, but there is a reason that some antifascists choose to doxx the fash: sending anonymous letters to home addresses, calling workplaces to tell their bosses/coworkers about their political activities, and sticking "THIS PERSON IS A FASCIST" posters that include their name and photograph all over their neighbourhoods can make the lives of these people significantly harder -

making it less likely for them to be directly engaged with the movement. If you have to move out 'cause you've lost your job and your community has rejected you because of your beliefs (and you get an anonymous parcel delivered to your house every week which just contains photos of Indiana Jones punching nazis), suddenly that "Defend Our Heritage" demo next Saturday seems less appealing. This is effective antifascism, and might be safer to perform than beating someone up (or getting beaten up yourself) at a counterdemo right in the cops' line of sight.

b) Confrontational Actions

While we would absolutely emphasise that non-confrontational actions are part of the spectrum of effective antifascism, it should come as no surprise that confrontational actions are also part of the mix. So with that said, we get to the spicy stuff.

Dress to impress

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of what an action looks like and how to stay safe in the heat of the moment, let's take a minute to go over some basic ground work. As with all things - particularly in antifascism - ninety percent of staying safe is in being well prepared. So, with this in mind: what should you wear, and what should you bring?

- **The truth is that it depends on the circumstances, but as a good rule of thumb: don't wear or bring anything that will make you easily identifiable during or after an action:** your wallet, ID, and (if possible) phone should all be left at home - if you're using public transport to get to and from the action then pay for it in cash - as well as your pastel pink my little pony hoodie (unless, of course, you're going in Brony Bloc).

- Cover any identifiable tattoos as well as unique hair styles/colours, and try to wear clothing that wouldn't mark you out as different: so a black/grey hoodie, dark trousers, and trainers often work, as that is what most people wear most of the time: wear clothes that are comfortable and warm that allow you to move freely (so skinny jeans are a no), and shoes that have appropriate support and padding in case you need to run. If you can, cover your face - including mouth, cheeks, nose, hair, ears, and eyebrows (as well as any piercings) - in case you accidentally show up in a photograph or some CCTV footage, or something like that.
- You're probably aware of the term "black bloc", but if you aren't, picture a protest where everyone wears black: congratulations, you now know what the black bloc is. Simple. It's closely associated with antiauthoritarian left-wing politics, and is what people tend to think of when they hear the phrase "anarchist protest bloc". As well as being cool as hell, a large black bloc allows for absolute anonymity (as everyone in the crowd looks pretty much the same), and when you're in one you feel like a million dollars. However, showing up to a protest and being one of ten people in black can also make you a target, as it's fairly noticeable if nobody else is doing it. Some people have started adopting the use of 'grey bloc': where you wear nondescript clothing that happens to cover your face. This is potentially less anonymous, as people don't look "nearly identical", but if you're aware that the anarchist presence at a demo is going to be tiny it's probably your safer option. Given a crowd of a large enough size, those in greys can still "disappear" after an action or interaction with police and potentially change clothing.

- Another thing that you could do is a "themed" bloc: such as you all wearing, for example, replica Alexander Peden masks (look it up if you're not familiar) - but these kinds of flashy, attention-grabbing dress codes should probably be reserved for stuff on the fluffier side.

If it seems like you'll need it, bring equipment. Not, like, a hammer or a machete though: something which can give you plausible deniability. For example, you can make a pretty sturdy banner out of a bedsheet and two or three broomsticks, which can be used as "walls" or defences between yourselves and fascists/cops; similarly, umbrellas can have a wide variety of uses (you ever been hit with a wrapped umbrella?). As we've learnt from comrades in parts of the world where antifascist protests tend to be more confrontational: motorcycle/skating helmets can protect against projectiles (and also can make pretty good on-the-fly weapons if needs be); padded gloves and bikers' jackets raise the amount or severity of hits you can take (irl +HP potion); some people in some places dress up big sticks as flags which they can then use as clubs if they need to. If this is what you're going in for, a good plan is to have a bunch of big burly antifascist friends who are willing to fight for you. However, if twenty people all show up with motorcycle helmets and visible stab-proof vests on, then police and fascists will know that you're a distinct group who are there for trouble and will treat you in kind. Read the vibe: what you're going for is anonymous, but prepared.

For afterwards, make sure you've brought some other clothes that are sufficiently different from the ones you were wearing during the action. This makes you less identifiable to police and fascists, and lowers the risk of you getting lifted or beaten up on the way home. Travel in groups (but not huge groups), and change somewhere sensible (such as a café or train station toilet). Dinnae be an eejit: prepare well, and stay safe.

Demonstrations

Antifascist or antiracist demonstrations don't always directly counter Fascist ones. For example, protests in response to racist violence - such as many Black Lives Matter marches - aren't there to explicitly counter a fash demo on the same day, but should definitely be thought of as being "antifascist demonstrations". However, fascists still tend to show up - cause they're absolute losers who have nothing better to do - and so there is often some degree of confrontation between antiracists and the fash at these kinds of things.

What is our role at this kind of demonstration? Well, if a bunch of fascists show up, then our job is to scare away the fascists. A world where antiracist marches can happen without pathetic wee men showing up to cosplay the notion of counter-demonstrating is a world worth fighting for, in our opinion. If you scare them away at this one, they are less likely to show up next time: and if you *really* scare them (like if you circle their sad little asses and convince them that you're going to beat them up unless they move along), then they might not come back ever again. However, if a bunch of fascists don't show up, we often feel like anarchists have a unique role in many protests: where other organised protestors might be subject to the governance of a party, and many stewards might be subject to the stewarding system's internal hierarchy, we are governed only by ourselves. This allows us to react quickly to situations - such as, for example, police intimidation - as they emerge, in a way that other organised protestors perhaps won't be able to. We also, as a rule, don't talk to cops, which puts us at an advantage when facing intimidation or antagonisation from the state.

Another thing: don't be generally scary. Chat to people on your side of the demo, be friendly, and offer to help with anything if they need it. It's a bad sign for our side if we go for being frightening above all else: yes, we should intimidate fascists, but try not to scare everyone else off at the same time. That's a fairly bad thing to do. There are security reasons for this as well: if you're going around being intimidating to everyone, then who is John Piss, casual member of the Socialist Workers' Party, going to talk to police about first? Exactly. So be nice.

Counter-demos

As we said earlier, ninety percent of being safe is in being prepared. It is always useful to know what forces and organisations are going to be on the other side: so do your reading - if it's a public demo, check Fascist social media accounts for when they're planning on being there, who's saying that they'll go, and who is doing the Call-Outs. Work out what "the vibe" is: are the fascists having a "peaceful demo", or are they planning to riot? Be aware, though, that "incitement to riot" is an actionable offence, so they're unlikely to go "we are gonna go smash stuff up" (unless they're eejits), but, for example, a Fascist action outside refugee housing has violent aspirations - even if they don't say it directly. Moreover, there are often actors within Fascist protests (especially large ones) who are definitely there for violence, so even their "peace" has the potential for physical confrontation. Keep an eye out for fascists that you recognise, where they are, how they move, and take note of their actions: if nothing else, this will be helpful for the future. Additionally, identify potential hate crime targets (such as

antifascist pubs, mosques, etc.) and work out the fastest way of getting between them and the fash.

Something they don't tell you until you start attending antifascist protests of this kind is that they're mostly boring, until they suddenly *aren't* (at which point they're terrifying). Most of what you will do at an antifascist demonstration is probably just going to be keeping an eye out to identify anything worrying going on. When the "worrying" happens, some good rules of thumb are:

- Identify what you need to do: (are you gonna be a body between fash and victims? Are you about to get into a street fight?) and have a clear plan for how you'll do this.
- Identify escape routes: never enter a situation that you cannot leave safely, if you can possibly help it.
- Go in groups and stick together: the more of you that there are, the less likely fascists are to think it's "worth it"
- Try to keep direct confrontation at demos visible: as bystanders can have a moderating effect on Fascist action (they are often very concerned about public image). The worst place you can be, unless numbers are very much on your side, is a back alley.
- Bear in mind that fascists engaging in violence are more likely than antifascists to be either armed (their telegram channels are full of people bragging about the weapons they own), drunk, or both, and that this can make their actions unpredictable: to them, a Fascist demo is a Big Day Out, and can often begin and end in a Wetherspoons (unlike ours, which tend to end chain-smoking in a dimly-lit speakeasy).

8: Connecting With Other Antifascists

So. You've now got some idea of how to go about shutting down the fash, and you're pumped. You want to share these ideas, and get more people involved—after all, the more people engaged in standing against fascism, the better, right?

Well, that's certainly a reasonable sentiment, and definitely true in a general sense. But, given some of the security considerations we've talked about so far, it's a good idea to be cautious and thoughtful about how you go about working with others.

There are sort of two aspects to this. Firstly, figuring out how and when to interact with other existing antifascist affinity groups (it's probably best to avoid interacting too closely with the sort of antifascist megachats that often pop up in reaction to specific threats) and second, helping newer or less engaged folks get involved. Both are definitely worth doing, but doing with care and an eye towards both your own and others' safety. We do want more people involved in fighting fascism, but we don't want to put people in unnecessary danger.

In either case, the first step is always the building of close, trusting, *individual* relationships. When it comes to cooperating with other affinity groups, it's a good idea to know most of the people involved reasonably well, at least to the level of having worked closely with them beforehand in other contexts. It's generally *not* wise to go entirely based off a group's reputation or any other kind of secondhand or indirect knowledge. To some extent you can trust those you don't know if they've been vouched for by someone you do, but there's no need to rush into close, security-intensive activity with anyone—make the effort to build up those relationships first. It's a bit of a progressive process: start

getting to know people in less risk-intensive settings, then begin to cooperate more loosely, before finally, if appropriate, collaborating on higher-security activities. This is a process that should start with those who are in the same specific context as you, but can expand to interlink among different geographies.

This general process is also a good foundation for building up antifascist activity within any given context. There's something to be said for putting some effort into developing and engaging with a broader radical movement wherever you might be so that there are things going on where you're likely to bring in and meet people with similar values and thus hopefully an interest in antifascist organising.

When it comes to explicitly trying to bring more people into antifascist work, things get a bit tricky — it's not a good idea to broadcast that you're involved in this work, and there's rarely a need for your whole group and other established groups or interested individuals to *all* converge in a mass meeting — but if you've taken the time to build actual relationships, it's manageable.

It's not a bad idea to start by facilitating a general discussion on antifascist organising, inviting only the individual people you know and trust, seeing who's in the room, and trying to get a sense of what relationships and groupings *already* exist or are emerging, but it's important to understand that others can and should engage in antifascism independently and autonomously, and will communicate whenever and however it is safe and necessary to do so.

In any case, you can use this zine as a jump-off point, and then go from there, sharing the kinds of ideas that have been presented here.

9: And So... What Now?

And that's all we have. Or... almost all.

Although we've touched on this in certain chapters, it's important to reiterate that you need to look after yourselves, individually and collectively, as you progress with your antifascism. The term 'self-care' is loathsome, and we avoid it, but we nonetheless see the risks in you diving deeply into this activism without coming up for air.

So we entreat you not to get caught up in thinking, reading and talking about antifascism every minute of the day. Resist the impulse to be a capitalist about your antifascism, striving for bigger, better, more! An all-encompassing self-sacrifice will consume you, trust us. So set limits. Recognise unhealthy patterns. Allow yourself time for joy, relaxation and sensuous pleasure, or this work will overwhelm you.

Because in its heart, antifascism has a point besides combatting the forces of evil, and by that we mean it strives for a pin prick on the horizon which lies beyond fascism's grasp. We do all of this because there are people, experiences and spaces that are worth fighting for. Take time, here and now, to prefigure the world *after* fascism, and allow that to fuel you.

And yet, somewhat conversely, we also ask you to also consider the ways in which you can take this antifascist spirit, purposefully and creatively, into other aspects of your life, to live it with kindness, inclusiveness and radicality overall, rounding out your politics in the other things you do. How can the ethos, structure and behaviour of your antifa group be a model for other aspects of your life? How can your dedication and bravery manifest in a thousand different ways? How can the way you fight, and the world you fight for, become one and the same?

Essentially, what we are suggesting is that you can and should be an antifascist in everything you do, yet at the same time we invite you not to explicitly do antifascism every waking moment.

We've thrown a lot at you, and we truly hope that in doing so, we've stoked a flame that will burn brightly within you long into the future. For this is essential, world-saving work. But the world isn't going to be saved by superheroes, because they simply don't exist. It can and will only be done by people with the passion and determination to make it happen.

It is far, far too late for your passivity and pessimism. We - us, you and our motley comrades - are all that we have... and we are everything.

We leave you with what we hope is this small gift of an overarching idea: that you can and will both embody this spirit and welcome others into it. That you have the capacity and the compassion to do so. And that you, individually and as a small collective, will continue to build the movement, always and evermore... outwards, not upwards.

You have much to accomplish, and we leave you with an echo from some of our first words to you:

We'd truly love to support you in person, to put an arm around you, to meet up every now and then as you grow in your work, to befriend you, encourage you.

But we can't.

Sorry.

This is all built on trust.

We don't know you.

This is, as we hope you now know, the very best way we can think of to square that circle.

So we wish you well, you strangers.

Every last one of you.

Be safe.

Please, *please*, be safe.

We love you.

This is *No Roof Only Sky* [8]

*“We wrote this text because we want to grow the
antifascist movement.*

*But instead of our group growing upwards like a
tall tree, connected by ever-thinner branches, we
want to share what we know so that iterations of
our model can expand and be copied a hundred
times over.*

We want to grow the movement:

Outwards, not upwards.”



norooftonlysky.com